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Citation for published version:

Hämeen-Anttila, J 2019, 'al-Khans's poem in -lah and its Qur'nic echoes: The long and the short of it', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186318000305>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S1356186318000305](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186318000305)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society

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al-Khansā's poem in -ālahā and its Qur'ānic echoes. The long and the short of it

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Al-Khansā's *mutaqārib* poem rhyming in -ālahā is one of her most interesting *marthiyas*. It is said to have been composed as a lamentation for her brother Mu'āwiya or, according to others, Ṣakhr. It was famous in Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd times: its verses were often quoted in philological literature and anthologies, Abū l-'Atāhiya (d. 211/826) modelled a poem of his on it,¹ and, according to al-Ṣfahānī, Aghānī, xv, p. 64, Ibn Surayj used to sing it. This article will study two questions related to this poem: how was it changed through anthologising and what is its relation to the Qur'ān, and Surah 99?

Al-Khansā's life is sparsely documented and we know very little about her. The anecdotes in, e.g., the Aghānī are of dubious historicity. All sources agree that she was a *mukhaḍram* poet, who started her career during the Jāhiliyya and continued it well into Islamic times. She is said to have met the Prophet, perhaps in 629, but the story is probably apocryphal. Whether al-Khansā died in the 640s or in the 660s, or sometime in between, is unknown, and the suggested dates for her death are based on anecdotes. In fact, one cannot do much more than agree with the sources that she was a *mukhaḍram*. To be more exact would be stretching the evidence.² Her Dīwān was collected by several philologists in the

¹ Abū l-'Atāhiya, Dīwān (Bayrūt, 1400/1980), p. 375. A longer version of the poem is to be found in Abū l-Faraj al-Ṣfahānī, Kitāb al-Aghānī, 25 vols. (Bayrūt, n.d.), iv, pp. 35–36.

² The most comprehensive study of her life is G. Gabrieli, *I Tempi, la vita e il canzoniere della poetessa araba al-Ḥansā'* (Firenze, 1899), pp. 57–159, who unfortunately takes the anecdotes rather uncritically as facts, as does Fr. Krenkow, 'al-Khansā', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1927), iv, pp. 901–902. N. Rhodokanakis, *al-Ḥansā' und ihre Trauerlieder. Ein literar-historischer Essay mit textkritischen Exkursen* (Sitzungsberichte d. phil.-hist. Klasse 147/4, 1904) and F. Gabrieli, 'al-Khansā', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New edition (Leiden, 1978), iv, p. 1027 are more critical, but basically what we know about al-Khansā' boils down to the brief note in R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines à la fin du XVe siècle de J.-C.*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1952–1966), pp. 290–292. Cf. also F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 9 vols., (Leiden, 1967–1984), ii, pp. 311–314, and G.J. van Gelder (1998), 'al-Khansā', in *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*, 2 vols., ed. J. Scott Meisami–P. Starkey (London–New York, 1998), ii, p. 435. For *rithā'* in general, see I. Goldziher, 'Bemerkungen zur arabischen Trauerpoesie,' *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 16 (1902), pp. 307–339, Rhodokanakis, *al-Ḥansā'*, E. Wagner, *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*. I: *Die altarabische Dichtung* (Darmstadt, 1987), pp. 116–134, J.E. Bellamy, 'Some

ninth century.³ Until at least the late 8th century, her poems were also transmitted orally in her own tribe, the Sulaym.⁴

In whatever decade al-Khansā' died, her poetry shows little influence of Islamic thought or Qur'ānic vocabulary.⁵ Yet her poem rhyming in -ālahā, translated in the Appendix, seems to be an exception. In the Dīwān this poem is one the longest, consisting of 31 or 38 verses, depending on the version. It seems to exhibit some striking Qur'ānic influences. These can best be appreciated when comparing the excerpt of the poem in al-Mubarrad's Kāmil (iv, p. 50) to *Sūrat al-Zalzala* (Q 99: 1–5):⁶

1. a-ba'da bni 'Amrin min Āli l-Sharīdi ḥallat bihi **l-arḍu athqālahā** (H2)
2. la-ʿamru abīhi la-niʿma l-fatā idhā l-nafsu aʿjabahā **mā lahā** (H4)
3. fa-in taku Murratu awdat bihī fa-qad kāna yukthiru taqtālahā (H18)
4. fa-kharra l-shawāmikhu min faqdihi **wa-zulzilāt-i l-arḍu zilzālahā** (H19)
5. hamamtu bi-nafsiya kulla l-humūmi **fa-awlā li-nafsiya awlā lahā** (H6)
6. li-aḥmila nafsī ʿalā ālatin fa-immā ʿalayhā wa-immā lahā (H7)

The following is a translation of these verses in this context. As will be seen later, when the verses are read in another context, that of the complete poem, some of them may have to be translated differently:

observations on the Arabic rithā', Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam, 13 (1990), pp. 44–61, G. Borg, Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer meines Herzens. Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau (Istanbul, 1997), and R. Jacobi, 'Bemerkungen zur frühislamischen Trauerpoesie,' Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 87 (1997), pp. 83–99.

³ Sezgin, Geschichte, ii, p. 313. Cf. also Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, ed. R. Tajaddud (Tih-rān, 1381 AHSh), pp. 179, 187.

⁴ Sezgin, Geschichte, ii, p. 312.

⁵ Gabrieli, 'al-Khansā' says that "her poetry is wholly pagan in feeling" and one may easily agree with this. Cf. also Rhodokanakis, al-Ḥansā', pp. 8, 15. Note, however, that in later literature many "Islamic" verses are attributed to her. See below for one example.

⁶ In numbering the verses, I refer to the first edition by L. Cheikho, Anīs al-julasā' fī Dīwān al-Khansā', [ed. L. Cheikho] (Bayrūt, 1889), abbreviated as H, which is also the basis of al-Ḥūfī's edition, Sharḥ Dīwān al-Khansā', ed. ʿA. al-Ḥūfī (Bayrūt, 1405/1985). Similarities between the poem and the Surah are marked in boldface. For the expression *awlā li-... fa-awlā*, cf. Q 75: 34–35. Minor variants in the verses are noted only when relevant for the argument.

1. Has earth embellished its burdens (i.e., the dead) after (the death of) the son of 'Amr, from the family of al-Sharīd (i.e., by his death)?
2. By the life of his father, he was an excellent youth, when the soul was delighted by what it has!
3. The Murra may have killed him, but not ere he had massacred them over and over again!
4. Mountains crumble because of his loss and the earth is shaken,
5. but I tried every means – woe upon my soul, woe upon it! –
6. to force my soul (to accept) any state, whether for or against it.

The Qur'ānic Surah 99 reads:

1. **idhā zulzilat-i l-arḍu zilzālahā**
2. **wa-akhraja-t-i l-arḍu athqālahā**
3. **wa-qāla l-insānu mā lahā**
4. **yawma'idhin tuḥaddithu akhbārahā**
5. **bi-anna rabbaka awḥā lahā**

1. When earth is shaken
2. and pushes out its burdens
3. and man asks: "What ails it?",
4. then it will tell its tales,
5. for your Lord inspires it.

In Alan Jones' terms, we find in these two sources "complex overlapping phraseology"⁷ and it would be difficult to argue that the striking similarities are accidental or insignificant. But if they are not, what are they? To find an answer to this we have to sift all available evidence with some care, instead of rushing to premature conclusions about the relations between the two texts.

⁷ A. Jones, 'Narrative technique in the Qur'ān and in early poetry,' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 25 (1994), pp. 185–191, here p. 185.

The verses come from a long poem, where there are few if any other significant similarities with the Qur'ān. In general, the textual history of al-Khansā's Dīwān is by no means unproblematic and this poem in particular has been transmitted in widely divergent forms, with the number and the order of the verses greatly differing in the various recensions, not to mention variants in individual verses. A quick look at the verse order of the two main recensions of the Dīwān will show this. In addition, the poem is often quoted in anthologies, again with various verse orders. For our discussion, the Kāmil and another of al-Mubarrad's works, Ta'āzī, pp. 96–99, are highly relevant. For comparison, I also give al-Iṣfahānī's Aghānī, xv, pp. 72–75:⁸

H	S	K	T	A ⁹
1 sirbālahā	1	-	1	1
2 athqālahā	2	1	3	2
3 mā lahā	3	-	2	3
4 ajdhālahā	7	2	4	-
5 amthālahā	8	-	5	-
6 awlā lahā	5	5	21	[6]
7 wa-immā lahā	6	6	22	5
8 ashqā lahā	-	-	-	-
<hr/>				
9 abqā lahā	27	-	9	8
10 yuḥlā lahā	28	-	-	-
11 adhlālahā	4	-	-	[4]
12 amthālahā	25	-	10	9

⁸ Abbreviations: H = ed. al-Ḥūfī, pp. 83–86 (= Cheikho, Anīs, pp. 73–77); S = Dīwān al-Khansā', ed. A. Abū Suwaylim (ʿAmmān, 1409/1988), pp. 78–109 (=L. Cheikho, Commentaires sur le Diwan d'al-Ḥansā' (Beyrouth, 1896), pp. 201–218, also containing a commentary attributed to Tha'lab); K = al-Mubarrad, al-Kāmil, ed. M. Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4 vols. (Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, n.d.); T = al-Mubarrad, Kitāb al-Ta'āzī wa'l-marāthī, ed. M. al-Dībājī (Dimashq, reprint Bayrūt, 1412/1992); A = al-Iṣfahānī, Aghānī. Verses of the poem are also found in, e.g., Aghānī, xv, p. 64 (vv. H1–2, 18, 7–8), Ibn Ṭayfūr, Balāghāt al-nisā' (Bayrūt, 1987), pp. 260–261 (vv. H2, 7, 14, 9, 18, 20–22), and al-Ḥamāsa al-maghribiyya, mukhtaṣar Kitāb Ṣafwat al-adab wa-nukhbat dīwān al-ʿArab li-Abī l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Tādīlī, 2 vols., ed. M. Riḍwān al-Dāya (Bayrūt-Dimashq, 1411/1991), p. 814 (no. 450 = K).

⁹ The verses in square brackets are missing from the text, but referred to in the commentary.

13 wa-yurmā lahā	26	-	11	10
14 abṭālahā	10	-	6	[7]
15 qālahā	29	-	17	11
16 aw‘ālahā	32	-	-	-
17 amthālahā	31	-	18	12
18 taqtālahā	35	3	19	13
19 zilzālahā -	4	-	-	
20 ajlālahā	38	-	20	14

21 aḥmālahā	11	-	12	15
22 adnā lahā	12	-	13	16
23 ghālahā	13	-	-	17
24 adhyālahā	14	-	7	18
25 akfālahā	15	-	8	-
26 adhyālahā	16	-	-	19
27 aghfālahā	20	-	(16) ¹⁰	20
28 awṣālahā	21	-	14	21
29 iklālahā	22	-	15	22
30 aṭfālahā	23	-	-	23
31 ashbālahā	24	-	-	24

H can be divided into three blocks of verses, H1–8, H9–20, and H21–31, which roughly correspond to similar blocks in S. The main difference between H and S is that the latter has these blocks in the order 1-3-2.

Another difference is that S has nine additional verses, although lacking two of H (H8, H19). T has one additional verse (T16: *wa-muḥṣanatin min banāti l-mulūki qa‘qa‘ta bi’l-rumḥi khalkhālahā*).¹¹ It is noteworthy that the additional verses of S are not found in the

¹⁰ Cf. below.

¹¹ This verse is attributed to ‘Āmir ibn Juwayn al-Ṭāṭī in ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, ed. ‘A. Muḥammad Hārūn, 9 vols. (al-Qāhira, 1979–1983) i, pp. 51–53. Ibn Juwayn’s poem has not been preserved *in toto*, but verses of it are quoted in various sources, e.g., Aghānī, iv, pp. 93–94.

other sources listed above and they are rarely attested elsewhere in literature.¹² The order of the verses in A and T comes closer to H than to S.¹³ K is too short for its verse order to be analysed, but its third and fourth verses (H18–19) come before its fifth and sixth verses (H6–7), and only T has these verses in this order, whereas in H, S, and A they come in the reverse order. Thus, there is a slight similarity between the two versions, K and T, transmitted by al-Mubarrad.

As may be seen from the table, H2 is an integral part of the poem in whichever form it is quoted, whereas H19 is only found in the Kāmil and one of the Dīwān recensions and it is scarce in philological literature. Moreover, in Ibn Ṭayfūr, Balāghāt, p. 260, it is given in the commentary as a variant of H20, which it indeed structurally resembles:

H19 fa-	kharra	l-shawāmikhu	min	qatlihī /	wa-	zulzilat-i	l-arḍu	zilzālahā
H20 wa-	zāla	l-kawākibu	min	faqdihi /	wa-	jullilat-i	l-shamsu	ajlālahā

As repetition is one of the standard features of the *marthiya*, this, however, cannot be considered in any way decisive: two consecutive verses often have the same structure in a *marthiya*.

It is, however, disturbing that in the Taʿāzī, which quotes 22 verses, or two thirds, of this poem, all the other verses of the Kāmil are present, except for H19. In his detailed study of two other poems by al-Khansā', S. Bonebakker, 'Mubarrad's version' has shown that al-

¹² Some of the additional verses of S derive from the family tradition of al-Khansā' and the Banū Sulaym. Thus, e.g., S18–19 are explicitly said (S, p. 94) to have been transmitted by the little-known Bedouin philologist Shujā' al-Sulamī, whose (great?-)grandmother is said to have been al-Khansā'. For Shujā', see S. Wild, *Das Kitāb al-ʿAin und die arabische Lexikographie* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 18, n. 54, and J. Hämeen-Anttila, *Lexical ibdāl. Part I: Introduction. Source studies* (Helsinki, 1993): 190. He seems to have been among the older generation of Bedouin philologists in the Ṭāhirid court. For the family tradition, see also Seeger A. Bonebakker (1994), 'Mubarrad's version of two poems by al-Khansā'', in ed. W. Heinrichs–G. Schoeler, *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag. II: Studien zur arabischen Dichtung* (Beirut, 1994), pp. 90–119, here p. 118.

¹³ A study of the manuscripts would probably shed more light on this issue. See also Appendix, where the verses are given in the order of S, which shows more clearly the similarities and differences between S and A.

Mubarrad's version in the Taʿāzī is based on good sources. All considered, it is somewhat dubious whether H19 belonged to the poem in the early phases of transmission. One should not speak of authenticity, as in any case oral transmission will have modified the poems. What we can say, though, is that some versions are earlier than others and H19 may be suspected of being a relative latecomer.

Let us, however, turn for a while away from this philological problem in order to study the question from another direction. What function do the Qurʾānic allusions have in the version of the Kāmil? Al-Mubarrad's selection of six verses looks almost like a *muʿāraḍa*, a poem written to match *Sūrat al-Zalzala*. The Qurʾānic vocabulary Islamizes the short poem, which focuses on the verses that contain Qurʾānic echoes. The idea of resurrection reverberates in the poem on account of the allusions to a passage which describes resurrection and then continues with individual judgment on the Judgment Day.

This changes the focus of the whole poem. Whether verses H2 and H19 were composed by al-Khansā' or were added by some later transmitter, they function differently in the long poem, being separated by 16 verses in between. In the Dīwān version H they may evoke the Qurʾān in general, but without drawing the attention of the reader/listener too closely to Q 99 and the resurrection.

Condensing a more than thirty-verse-long *marthiya* into a short miniature of six lines, in fact, makes a completely new poem out of elements which are found in the earlier one. In this case, the condensing has resulted in two radical changes in the tenor of the poem. The first is the severance of the poem from its pre-Islamic ritualistic background. Both long versions, H and S, exhibit many typical characteristics of a ritualistic dirge, with repetitions and emphasis on prowess in battle. Al-Mubarrad's version in the Kāmil, on the contrary, shows no signs of repetition and leaves the belligerent side of the deceased to a brief, although impressive and poignant mention (*fa-qad kāna yukthiru taqtālahā*). In fact, it is merely stated that Ibn ʿAmr was an excellent man. Few particulars of this alleged excellence are given.

All this is replaced by Qurʾānic allusions. Slightly more than a fifth (28 syllables out of a total of 133) of this short poem echoes the Qurʾān, letter for letter. This makes it impossible

for even a casual reader not to notice the strong dependence. From another viewpoint, more than 40% of Q 99: 1–5 (22 syllables out of 52) finds a parallel in the Kāmil version of the poem.

For the interpretation of the poem this is crucial. It has often been noted that the new Islamic worldview did not affect al-Khansā's poetry. This, most certainly, is true and the worldview in al-Khansā's poems differs little from that of her predecessors. The long versions of this poem draw the reader's attention to the manly Bedouin virtues, the *muruwwāt*, of Ibn 'Amr. Read in translation the poem has almost nothing to remind one of the Qur'ān.

Al-Mubarrad's short version changes the situation radically. It is unlikely that this happened accidentally. The consciousness of the mind behind the Kāmil version, be it al-Mubarrad or someone else in the line of the poem's transmission,¹⁴ may be seen at its clearest in the variant to H4. In al-Mubarrad's version the second hemistich reads *idhā l-nafsu a'jabahā mā lahā*, whereas the Dīwān recension and T have *taḥushshu bihi l-ḥarbu ajdhālahā* "On his account many wars flared up" (H4 = S7 = T4).¹⁵ A hemistich full of Jāhilī ethos is here in a sense spiritualized. The connection of *idhā* and *naḥs* is also reminiscent of the Qur'ān, cf. especially Q 81: 7 (*idhā l-nufūsu zuwwijāt*).¹⁶

The Islamization of the Kāmil version becomes clear when we compare it to the same author's version in the Ta'āzī. Here the poem is much longer, 22 verses in all, but it lacks H19 and has the "un-Islamic" Dīwān variant in H4. Despite the presence of H2, the poem remains pagan in tenor and vocabulary, with less than 3% of the text possibly alluding to the Qur'ān.

¹⁴ Discussing another of al-Khansā's poems quoted by al-Mubarrad, Bonebakker, 'Mubarrad's version,' p. 111, says soberly that "we can only speculate about the text or oral transmission he adopted". This holds true for the present poem, too.

¹⁵ The version of K is only rarely attested in philological literature, which leaves little doubt that it is a later variant.

¹⁶ In the Qur'ān, the root 'JB is practically always used in a negative sense. As the version of the Kāmil is heavily influenced by Qur'ānic diction, I wonder whether the translation of this verse should actually be "he was an excellent youth while others were delighted by what they imagined they had", i.e., contrasting the real merit of Ibn 'Amr with the imagined merits of others.

All Qur'ānic allusions (Q 99: 1–3; Q 81: 7; Q 75: 34–35) in the Kāmil version refer to passages which speak of resurrection and the final judgment. This will not have gone unnoticed by the Muslim reader of al-Mubarrad's book. It may be somewhat overdoing the case, but I remain uncertain whether the final verse (H7) with its reference to the condition of the soul, "whether for or against it", might also have rung a bell and reminded the reader of the continuation of the Surah, Q 99: 6–8, where it is stated that after resurrection people will see all their deeds, whether good or bad. Or in other words, whether they be for or against them.

However that may be, the version of the *Kāmil* is a fully Islamic poem, exhibiting a worldview that would have been new in the early seventh century and that al-Khansā' herself might have found alien. Instead of listing the *muruwāt* of the deceased, the Kāmil version keeps these to the strict minimum of one hemistich while turning the reader's, or listener's, attention towards resurrection and the Qur'ān. The other versions ignore life after death¹⁷ and focus on the *muruwāt*. There is a clearly visible new spirit in the Kāmil version.

The change in the poem's meaning may also be seen in H2. According to commentaries there are basically two different ways to understand this verse (*a-ba'da bni 'Amrin min Āli l-Sharīdi ḥallat bihi l-arḍu athqālahā*). Above, the verse has been translated following the opinion of Abū 'Amr (al-Shaybānī)¹⁸ and others (S, pp. 79–80) and the strong Qur'ānic context of the Kāmil version favours this way of understanding it. In Q 99: 2 *athqālahā* refers to the dead – the other explanation commentaries give (*athqāl* = treasures) is less probable. Whichever *athqālahā* means, the Qur'ān describes them as something "pushed out" and the Qur'ānic allusion here excludes the other interpretation suggested by al-Aṣma'ī and others for the verse in the complete poem, where *athqāl* refers to more abstract burdens which Ibn 'Amr's death sets aside ("the earth has set aside its burdens

¹⁷ For Bedouin ideas related, or better, unrelated to this concept, see M.M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam. Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 288–295.

¹⁸ The identity of this Abū 'Amr is slightly problematic, see Bonebakker, 'Mubarrad's version,' pp. 114–115.

through him (i.e., his death: his constant raids no more disturb the earth)".¹⁹ Thus, in the version of the Kāmil, *ḥallat* must be understood as coming from *ḥallā* "to embellish", not *ḥalla* "to unpack; to open". This is also how al-Mubarrad explains the verse (Kāmil, iv, p. 50).

It seems, however, that the expression originally derived from *ḥalla*, not *ḥallā*. The evidence from early poetry favours this interpretation, and the other, *ḥallat* < HLY, may have risen as a misunderstanding, whether based on Q 99: 2 or not. In, e.g., al-A'shā, Dīwān²⁰ V: 9 (*aḥalla bihi l-shaybu athqālahū*) we have, unequivocally, the fourth stem of HLL in a similar expression. Bravmann, Studies, p. 302 (and n. 25) argues for understanding the second hemistich of this verse as "after the earth has laid down its baggage on Ibn 'Amr". Whichever interpretation we prefer, the verb has to be derived from *ḥalla*, not *ḥallā*. Even though not a letter has been changed in this verse, the new Qur'ānic context caused it to be understood differently.

H2 is well attested. It is, however, rarely quoted in religio-philological works to explain Q 99: 2, which seems to imply that the verse was not fabricated to explain this Qur'ānic verse. Thus, e.g., Ibn Qutayba, Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān²¹ does quote it (pp. 22–23), but in order to explain the use of the term *al-thaqalān*, not Q 99: 2. In short, there is nothing to indicate that H2 would be a late-comer in al-Khansā's poem. Thus, what is new is the way the verse was understood, not the verse itself. It should also be noted that expressions similar to H2 are also found in several other early poems,²² which makes it probable that

¹⁹ S, p. 79. Al-Aṣma'ī understands this as follows: the ever-raiding Ibn 'Amr and his companions were a burden to earth, constantly disturbing it by the hooves of their horses galloping to raids. Ibn Durayd, Waṣf al-maṭar wa'l-saḥāb, ed. 'I. al-Tanūkhī (Dimashq, repr. Bayrūt, 1412/1992), pp. 55, 57, explains the expression *ḥāmilatun li-athqālihā* in a Bedouin's speech (about *al-arḍ*) as (*ḥāmilatun*) *li-man 'alayhā min al-nās wa-ghayrihim*. Al-Ḥuṣayn ibn al-Ḥumām's Islamized poem (cf. below, note 27) follows Qur'ānic diction (*wa-nādā munādin bi-ahli l-qubūri l-fa-habbū li-tubriza athqālahā*) but the verse is clearly a later addition and tells little of early seventh-century diction.

²⁰ R. Geyer, Gedichte von al-'A'shā und von al-Musayyab ibn 'Alas (London, 1928).

²¹ Ibn Qutayba, Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān, ed. al-S.A Ṣaqr (Bayrūt, 1398/1978).

²² The verse resembles Shamardal XII: 2, which was not lost to Arab scholars, cf., e.g., al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, Ghurar al-fawā'id wa-durar al-qalā'id, 2 vols., ed. M. Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (al-Qāhira, 1998), i, p. 97. It should be noted that in the following verse Shamardal has *zalāziluh*. For an analysis of the meaning of this verse, see T. Seidensticker, Die Gedichte des Šamardal ibn Šarīk. Neuedition, Übersetzung, Kommentar

the expression was part of poetic diction and came to al-Khansā' from this tradition, not from the Qur'ān.²³ Hence, H19 being a probable latecomer and H2 independent of the Qur'ān, there is little in the original poem that can be taken as evocative of the Qur'ān.

A small, but significant change was made in H6. In the Kāmil version, the following verse begins with *li-aḥmila*, instead of the standard *sa-aḥmilu*. The change concerns only one letter, but it does away with the suicidal thoughts of H6. In the *Dīwān* these verses could freely be translated as "I was about to take my own life (...) but I will take whatever may come (...)". The variant *li-aḥmila* becomes syntactically subordinated to *hamamtū* in H6 and, consequently, gives the aim of this action ("I did my best *in order to* carry on despite my misery"). The standard variant *sa-aḥmilu*, on the other hand, begins a new sentence and introduces a contrasting new thought, which is further reinforced by H8, which takes up the theme of *ṣabr*, patience against misfortunes. Left to itself, H6 is suicidal and definitely un-Islamic.²⁴ According to the commentary attributed to Tha'lab (S, p. 85), the variant *li-aḥmila* comes from al-Khansā's own tribe, the Sulaym.²⁵

There is also another way the poem has changed when anthologized by al-Mubarrad. The short poem in the Kāmil turns inwards and emphasizes the psychological aspects of the poem. External things, such as the many examples of Ibn 'Amr's prowess, generosity, and his other *murūwwāt*, are almost completely missing, while the feelings of the poet take the central stage – the word *nafs* is repeated four times – and even the cosmos takes part in her grief: earth shakes and mountains crumble. These verses are, of course, also found in

(Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 118–119. Seidensticker translates Shamardal's verse (*wa-ḥallat bihī athqālahā l-arḍu* ...) as "und wenn die Erde mit ihm ihre Lasten (an Toten) geschmückt hat", which seems improbable in the light of M.M. Bravmann, *Studies in Semitic Philology* (Leiden, 1977), p. 302 and the present discussion. For al-Ḥuṣayn ibn al-Ḥumām's poem, see notes 19 and 27.

²³ This also opens up the question whether the Qur'ān could be using contemporary poetic idioms here, cf. below.

²⁴ Al-Khansā' has a famous and openly suicidal verse (*fa-law-lā kathratu l-bākīna ḥawlī 'alā ikhwānihim la-qāaltu nafsī* H, p. 62; S, p. 326) in another poem, see also A. Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry. I: Marāthī and Ṣu'lūk Poems* (Reading, 1992): 93 (v. 11) and Rhodokanakis, *al-Ḥansā'*, p. 68. Cf. Wagner, *Grundzüge*, p. 124.

²⁵ The Kāmil version also leaves out H31, which introduces the un-Islamic *nawḥ* in a very prominent place in the last verse. This, though, is not necessarily significant as the Kāmil only selects a few verses from the original.

the long versions and such imagery is not rare in pre-Islamic *marthiyas*, but here they become more prominent when the tangible deeds of the deceased are omitted. The focus changes from the actions of the deceased to the feelings of the poet, which are mirrored by the reactions of the world around her. The focus changes from the outward and material to the inward and spiritual. Again, there is a modern spirit in the short version of the Kāmil.

Ibn Dā'ūd's anthology Kitāb al-Zahra,²⁶ in a sense, takes the process begun by al-Mubarrad even further. Ibn Dā'ūd has a special chapter (pp. 819–820) on Qur'ānic expressions used by poets (*Mā sta'ānat bihi l-shu'arā' min kalām Allāh ta'ālā*). Al-Khansā's poem in -ālahā dominates this chapter, which consists of three verses from this poem, together with three verses by al-Kumayt and one by Jarīr.

Ibn Dā'ūd first quotes the two most "Islamic" verses of the poem, H2 and H19, and then, separately, adds a third verse, H6, "from this *qaṣīda*". By doing so, he distils the Qur'ānic element even further, now quoting a 2+1 fragment, where slightly more than 40% of the syllables (27/67) echo the Qur'ān, as contrasted to the 3% of H and the roughly 20% of the Kāmil version. He does not give these three verses as an independent unit, but as a selection from a longer poem, but the point is clear and unavoidable: al-Khansā' imitated the Qur'ān in her poem. Interestingly, elsewhere in his book (p. 533) Ibn Dā'ūd quotes seven verses from the same poem, but here any allusions to the Qur'ān are avoided. In a third place of the same book, p. 540, he attributes to al-Khansā' a fragment of two verses rhyming in -aCrū with a strong Qur'ānic flavour, using technical terms such as *al-ajr* and *al-ḥashr*. Not surprisingly, these verses are not to be found in the Dīwān nor are they quoted in philological literature. They are most unlikely to be genuine.

The role of the anthologist is not always restricted to selecting and abbreviating. Even when he makes very few changes in the text itself, he may create a new poem that has to be read in a completely different way from the original. In al-Khansā's case, this

²⁶ Ibn Dā'ūd, Kitāb al-Zahra, 2 vols., ed. I. al-Sāmarrā'ī (al-Zarqā', 1406/1985).

Islamization was done with light touches, but other poets were modified more freely, as in the case of a poem by another *mukhaḍram* poet, al-Ḥuṣayn ibn al-Ḥumām al-Murri.²⁷

Al-Khansā's poem has been completely rewritten without changing more than a few words of the earlier text. The changes have been achieved by reorganizing and selecting the material from an original poem in a way that has produced a work of art radically different from the original.²⁸ Some anthologists work rather mechanically and cannot properly be called authors in their own right, but especially in the earlier stages of the transmission significant changes were often made by transmitters and anthologists, both in verse and prose. Sometimes the changes are deliberate and creative, and the anthologist should be seen as a second author continuing the work of the first author, the poet.²⁹

This also means that if we are to understand Arabic literary history, we cannot restrict ourselves to modern *diwān* editions, as many Mediaeval authors will not have read their predecessors' poems in this format but only as short fragments in more commonly used books and anthologies. In studying, e.g., the relation of later *marthiya* authors to al-Khansā', we have to remember that they did not have Cheikho's editions at hand.

²⁷ This poem consists of 15 *mutaqārib* verses. The poem, or verses from it, are found in various sources, e.g., al-Iṣfahānī, Aghānī, xiv, pp. 15–16 and al-Ṣafadī, Kitāb al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt, xiii, ed. M. al-Ḥujayrī (Wiesbaden, 1984), pp. 90–91. The last five verses of the poem are clearly Islamic and, besides alluding to Q 99: 2, use a thoroughly Islamic vocabulary (e.g., v. 13: *wa-khaffa l-mawāzīnu bi'l-kāfirīna / wa-zulzilāt-i l-arḍu zilzālahā*). However, these last five verses differ in tenor from the first part of the poem and they are clearly a later Islamic addition. The poem is quoted on the ultimate authority of Abū 'Ubayda to prove and illustrate the poet's conversion to Islam. The first part of the poem is also suspiciously similar to al-Khansā's poem in -ālahā. Whatever the relation between the two poems might be, they cannot have been composed independently of each other.

²⁸ The resulting Islamized *marthiyas* reworked from al-Khansā's and Jāhilī poets' works differ in tenor from Umayyad elegies, where Qur'ānic allusions seem to be used somewhat differently, Umayyad poets more often referring to the content of the Qur'ān rather than using the highly poetic vocabulary of the early Surahs.

²⁹ For a discussion of the question of authorship in longer anecdotes, see J. Hämeen-Anttila, 'Multilayered Authorship in Arabic Anecdotal Literature,' in Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts, ed. L. Behzadi–J. Hämeen-Anttila (Bamberg, 2015), pp. 167–188.

The mutual influence of the Qur'ān and early poetry has been discussed in a number of recent studies. In a recent article,³⁰ I have discussed the possible relations between the Qur'ānic descriptions of Paradise and the nature descriptions in pre-Islamic poetry and on a general level the latter seem to have influenced the former, although it is difficult to show direct and specific similarities between the Qur'ān and an individual poem. The case of Umayya ibn Abī l-Ṣalt has been studied in several articles, but it seems highly unlikely that his poems could genuinely be from the early seventh century.³¹ Likewise, the poets around Muḥammad, most notably Ḥassān ibn Thābit, are too close to the Prophet to be above suspicion of later modifications, as there was a constant need of material to fill in the biography of the Prophet. The clearer the similarities are, the more likely it is that the poem has been considerably modified, or even forged, during its transmission.

The case of al-Khansā' is less problematic. The poem has no connection to the Prophet and his biography and there was no vested interest to change the poem in any particular direction. This does not mean, though, that we could be sure the text was not tampered with.

³⁰ J. Hämeen-Anttila, 'Paradise and Meadow in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry,' in ed. S. Günther–T. Lawson, *Roads to Paradise. Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, 2 vols., (Leiden–Boston, 2016), i, pp. 136–161

³¹ For recent controversy concerning the authenticity of his poems, see T. Seidensticker, 'The authenticity of the poems ascribed to Umayya ibn Abī al-Ṣalt,' in ed. J.R. Smart, *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature* (Richmond, Surrey, 1996), pp. 89–96, G. Borg, 'Umayya b. abī al-Ṣalt as a poet,' in ed. U. Vermeulen–D. De Smet, *Philosophy and Arts in the Islamic World, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 87 (1998), pp. 3–13, and again G. Borg, 'The divine in the works of Umayya b. abī al-Ṣalt,' in ed. G. Borg–E. de Moor (eds.), *Representations of the Divine in Arabic Poetry* (Amsterdam–Atlanta, GA, 2001), pp. 9–23. In Umayya's case, the stakes were – and are – high: his poems could be used to prove the widespread monotheism on the Peninsula, necessary for the monotheistic movement around the Ka'ba and a major piece in the background of Muḥammad's mission. W. Diem, *Studien zur Überlieferung und Intertextualität der altarabischen Dichtung. Das Mantelgedichts Ka'b ibn Zuhayr*, 2 vols., (Wiesbaden, 2010), especially on vv. 36–37, 40, and 48–49, discusses the possibility of the Qur'ān's influence on Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's *Burda*, but cf. my comments in J. Hämeen-Anttila, review of Diem, *Studien*, *Zeitschrift der arabischen Linguistik*, 57 (2013), pp. 87–90, here p. 89. For the influence of the Qur'ān on poetry, see also J.E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah. The tradition and practice of Early Arabic poetry* (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997), p. 220 and note 311.

As far as I can see, there is no inherent reason to doubt the authenticity of the poem as a whole, but what seems to have happened is that the Qur'ānic diction in verse H2 (*ḥallat bihi l-arḍu athqālahā*) induced a later transmitter, either consciously or not, to strengthen the Qur'ānic flavour by adding H19 (*wa-zulzilat-i l-arḍu zilzālahā*), which is not as securely transmitted as H2. This happened only after the two Dīwān recensions, H and S, were already transmitted separately. After this, the poem also started circulating in an abbreviated form where seemingly Qur'ānic echoes became prominent. The addition of H19, whether originally a variant of H20 or not, in its turn helped to change the understanding of H2 in a Qur'ānic direction.

The poem in -ālahā is not the only case of Qur'ānic influence superimposed on al-Khansā's poems. To take another example, Alan Jones discusses, translates, and prints al-Khansā's short poem rhyming in -āCiyah (H, pp. 99–100; S, pp. 58–62) in Jones, *Early Arabic poetry*, pp. 97–101, saying that the poem's final verse (*fa-aqsamtu lā yanfakku damī wa-ʿawlatī / ʿalayka bi-ḥuznin mā daʿā llāha dāʿiyah*) "surely shows the influence of Islam". Indeed, it does, but one should note that both this verse and Jones' v. 5, rhyming in *zabāniyah*, are missing from S, although they are present in H and Aghānī, xv, pp. 71–72. The poem would merit a separate study, but the first impression is that it, too, has been Islamized by adding these verses.³² In general, where we seem to find Qur'ānic or Islamic vocabulary in al-Khansā's poems, the poems or verses in question tend, on closer inspection, to be found only in some, or even none, of the Dīwān recensions. It seems possible that H has undergone more Islamizing changes than S.

Are there, then, any Qur'ānic echoes in al-Khansā's poem ending in -ālahā? Reading the version of the Kāmil, the answer would clearly be affirmative, but turning our attention to the Dīwān versions we have reason to hesitate. The clearest proof of al-Khansā's dependence on the Qur'ānic text is H19, and as we have seen, it is not particularly well

³² T. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Poesie der alten Araber* (Hannover, 1864, repr. Hildesheim, 1967), p. 158, n. 4, suggests an original *daʿā l-wayla dāʿiyah* "oder Aehnliches" for this Islamic phrase, while not commenting on *zabāniyah*. Another case where we might have Islamic references is H, p. 96 = S, p. 279 (see also Bonebakker, 'Mubarrad's version,' p. 105, and his comment, p. 106, on Q 53: 34), which mentions *al-bayt al-muḥarram*. All such cases should be carefully studied before taking them as evidence for early Islamic influence on al-Khansā' herself.

documented and seems a later addition.³³ H2 is more securely attested, but here we may well ask whether the similarity in the expressions *wa-akhrajat-i l-arḍu athqālahā* in Q 99: 2 and *wa-ḥallat bihi l-arḍu athqālahā* (H2) is, after all, a sign of Qur'ānic influence or not, as similar expressions are, as we have seen, found elsewhere in early poetry. It may well be that al-Khansā' got her line from contemporary poetic diction, not from the Qur'ān, and we should consider the poetic attestations to be *a priori* independent of the Qur'ān.

It also seems that earlier scholarship has all too easily assumed al-Khansā' to have been familiar with the Qur'ānic text. The biographical material – itself admittedly unreliable – gives us the impression that al-Khansā' was not too deeply influenced by the new religion³⁴ and an analysis of her poems points in the same direction: there is little in al-Khansā's poetry that reminds one of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, she neither lived in Mecca nor in Medina and Q 99 was not a centrally important text which would be given priority when teaching new converts – short credos as well as ritualistic and legal passages would have been more urgent material to be taught to the new community than early Meccan apocalyptic Surahs. This, of course, remains mere speculation, but I cannot see why we should presuppose that al-Khansā' knew Q 99 in the first place. The idea that a poet should know his or her Qur'ān comes much later.

The remaining phrases that the poem shares with the Qur'ān are short and not very significant (*awlā lī*; *mā lahā*). The outcome is that there is very little to be interpreted as Qur'ānic echoes in the poem as it stands in the Dīwān and, presumably, in the form it was given by the poet herself.

Should we, on the contrary, consider contemporary poetic diction to have influenced the Qur'ān? This is a question which we must tackle, albeit briefly.

³³ Already Rhodokanakis, *al-Ḥansā'*, p. 21 (n. 3), suggested that it had been generated by the influence of Q 99: 1.

³⁴ There is a famous, albeit dubious, anecdote about the apostasy of her son Abū Shajara, see, e.g., M.J. de Goeje et al. (eds.), *Annales quod scripsit (...) al-Ṭabarī*, 3 vols., (Leiden, 1879–1901), i, pp. 1905–1906, translated in F.M. Donner, *The Conquest of Arabia* (Albany, 1993), pp. 81–83.

The ease with which allusions to Q 99 were inserted in later poems in *mutaqārib* rises from the metrical structure of Q 99: 1–5.³⁵ The metre of *mutaqārib* is:³⁶

u_x / u_x / u_x / u_(u) // u_x / u_x / u_x / u_

Read according to the Royal Cairene edition, the first five verses of Q 99 scan (I add the division into *mutaqārib* feet to ease the comparison, but this division is not a feature of the Qur'ānic text itself. Parts that can be read as *mutaqārib* are marked in boldface):

1. u_ _ u / u_ _ / u_ _ / u_
2. u_u / u_ _ / u_ _ / u_
3. u_ _ _ _ u_ / u_
4. _uu_ / u_u / u_ _ / u_
5. u_ / u_u / u_ _ / u_

Verses 1, 4–5 have three feet in perfect *mutaqārib*, preceded by an irregular first foot. Verse 2 is in perfect *mutaqārib*, and verse 3 is irregular, except for the last foot.³⁷

This is not to imply that Q 99 uses Arabic metres. The similarity is most probably accidental in the sense that the early Meccan Surahs tend to have strong rhythmic patterns and if one verse for whatever reason resembles *mutaqārib*, the rest will more or less automatically follow. However, the *mutaqārib* is a strong metre that easily catches the ear, which may be why it was "used" in Surah 99.

The rhymes -āh, -ā, -āhā, -āḥā, and -ālahā are often used in *marthiyas*³⁸ and seem to have been onomatopoeic representations of lamentation and, if we trust our material, well

³⁵ It should be emphasized that *mutaqārib* is not a "Persian metre" (cf. Wagner, *Grundzüge*, pp. 48, 52), but one of the most frequent metres of pre- and early Islamic poetry after the four "great" metres *ṭawīl*, *basīṭ*, *kāmil*, and *wāfir*. See Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, p. 15, who incidentally takes al-Khansā's *Dīwān* as one of his examples. See also D. Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse. History and theory of 'arūḍ* (Leiden–Boston–Köln, 2000), pp. 259–290.

³⁶ u = short syllable; _ = long syllable; x = ambivalent syllable (anceps).

³⁷ V. 6 is again irregular, while vv. 7–8 exhibit three regular *mutaqārib* feet as opposed to two irregular ones, if we read, as we clearly should, the final word as *yarah* (rather than *yarahū*).

known and often used in pre-Islamic *marthiyas*. Thus, the Qur'ānic text shares some features with earlier *marthiyas*, and the contemporary audience of Q 99 would have been reminded by the first five Qur'ānic *āyas* of the elegies they were familiar with. It is not to be excluded that some of the lexical similarities between al-Khansā' and the Qur'ān may be due to the latter using the poetic vocabulary of *marthiyas*. The Qur'ān, after all, used contemporary language and spoke to the Arabs in "clear Arabic".

What this experiment has taught us is that we should be very careful in saying anything about early seventh-century poetry before we have gone through the whole evidence. Under closer examination, the clear Qur'ānic echoes in al-Khansā's poem in the version of the Kāmil turn out to be due to transmission and selection processes. There are Qur'ānic echoes in the poem as found in the Kāmil, but that version cannot properly be called a seventh-century poem. Although most of the poem's verses do come from that century, the anthologized poem as such is much later.

On the other hand, the analysis seems to open up a possibility that the first audience of the Qur'ān may well have recognized in Surah 99 features familiar to them from *marthiyas*. What this means for the literary analysis of the Qur'ān cannot be discussed here, but to the first audience it would, in any case, have made *Sūrat al-Zalzala* a radical departure from the familiar model of the *marthiya*, the *muruwwa* themes of which are replaced by references to the resurrection and the Last Judgment.

³⁸ Borg, *Mit Poesie*, pp. 92–93.

Appendix 1

Translation³⁹

H1. Oh what ails your eyes, what ails them? Tears have moistened your eyelids.

H2. (Are you still crying) after (the death of) the son of ʿAmr, from the family of al-Sharīd?
Earth has become free of his burden (i.e., he is no longer disturbing its peace with raids).

H3. So I swore I will never again be grieved by anyone's death⁴⁰ nor ask a woman who
cries what ails her!

H4. By the life of your father, he was an excellent youth! On his account many wars flared
up.

H5. He had a sharp spearhead and a nimble tongue and always paid back in kind.

H6. I had in mind all kinds of thoughts about my life – woe upon my soul, woe upon it! –

H7. yet I will take whatever may come, whether for or against my soul:

H8. if the soul remains patient, it will be gladdened, but if it despairs, all the more wretched
will it be!

H9. We disregard our souls (by not caring whether we die or not), but disregarding them in
a battle may yet preserve them best (in the memory)

H10. and we know that man's fate will catch up with him wherever it pleases.

H11. After this man left (lying) in al-Maḥw,⁴¹ let fate take whatever course it may!

³⁹ The division in movements is tentative. In this version, the poem has also been translated in le P[ère] de Coppier, *Le Diwan d'al-Ḥansā' précédé d'une étude sur les femmes poètes de l'ancienne Arabie* (Beyrouth, 1889), pp.162–166.

⁴⁰ H reads *ʿalā Mālikin*, which in this context does not seem to make sense. Hence, I have preferred the variant *ʿalā hālikin*.

⁴¹ Al-Bakrī's note in his *Muʿjam mā staʿjam min asmāʾ al-bilād waʾl-mawāḍiʿ*, 4 vols., ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā (al-Qāhira, 1417/1996), p. 1194, shows how unreliable our sources may sometimes be. Quoting this verse, al-Bakrī first locates al-Maḥw in the area of Banū Murra, but then continues that the verse has also been attributed to Mayya bint Ẹirār "in which case, al-Maḥw will have been in the area of Banū Ẹabba". In other words, his comment on the place's location is mere guesswork. The verse of Mayya is quoted in a different form (with Wādī Ashāʿayn, instead of al-Maḥw) in the commentary attributed to Thaʿlab, S, p. 83.

H12. Many a multitude, with helmet on and double armour, have we proudly proceeded to meet,⁴²

H13. like huge rainclouds,⁴³ full of massive white clouds, pushing each other on every side!

H14. And how many troops, horses closely packed under armoured men, have you met, challenging their heroes with your sword.

H15. Many a rhyme, like a sharp spearhead, which remains after the rhymer has gone,

H16. rending the top of Mt. Yadhbul, which had hitherto refused to part with (i.e., had protected) its mountain goats,

H17. have you pronounced, O son of ʿAmr, with ease, such as people had never spoken before.

H.18 The Murra may have killed him, but not ere he had massacred them over and over again!

H19. Mountains crumble because of his death and the earth is shaken,

H20. stars vanished and the sun was eclipsed when he was lost.

H21. Many a calamity, drawn upon himself by a criminal, such that would make nurses⁴⁴ drop their burden (out of fear),

H22. did the son of ʿAmr ward off, without calling for help – yet others would have been closer (to the culprit) than you.

H23. He was not the closest, but he will protect his kin against what may befall it

H24. on the crowded battlefield, where fate drags its trail (i.e., wields its weapons).

H25. You pierced them and when they turned around, you moistened the croups (of their horses) with the blood (of the riders).

⁴² I prefer the variant *zifnā lahā*.

⁴³ This verse is attributed to ʿĀmir ibn Juwayn in ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, i, p. 24 and comes after *wa-jāriyatīn min banātī l-mulūki qaʿqaʿta biʿl-rumḥi khalkhālahā*, thus becoming a description of a princess.

⁴⁴ In H *aḥmālahā* probably refers to the infants their mothers are carrying in their arms. S reads *al-ḥawāṣin* "(chaste) wives", in which case the verse refers to miscarriage.

H26. Many a lady you protected on a clamorous morning, when in terror she had bared her behind (in preparing to run).

H27. Many a herd (of fleeing enemies) have you driven, sitting in the saddle and branding with your sword the unbranded.⁴⁵

H28. Many a swift camel, strong like a rock in the river, have you left on the roadside,

H29. (riding) to meet a king, not a commoner. On this account it (the camel) was exhausted.

H30. You grant enemy land to your horses and they leave their foals behind during the raid.

H31. Many a lamentation have you caused, like the lowing of wide-eyed cows when they recognize their offspring.

Appendix 2

The order of the verses listed according to S

S	H	K	T	A
1	1	-	1	1
2	2	1	3	2
3	3	-	2	3
4	11	-	-	4
5	6	5	21	6
6	7	6	22	5
7	4	2	4	-
8	5	-	5	-
9	-	-	-	-
10	14	-	6	7
11	21	-	12	15
12	22	-	13	16
13	23	-	-	17

⁴⁵ Cf. Rhodokanakis, al-Ḥansā', p. 27.

14	24	-	7	18
15	25	-	8	-
16	26	-	-	19
17	-	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	-
19	-	-	-	-
20	27	-	16*	20
21	28	-	14	21
22	29	-	15	22
23	30	-	-	23
24	31	-	-	24
25	12	-	10	9
26	13	-	11	10
27	9	-	9	8
28	10	-	-	-
29	15	-	17	11
30	-	-	-	-
31	17	-	18	12
32	16	-	-	-
33	-	-	-	-
34	-	-	-	-
35	18	3	19	13
36	-	-	-	-
37	-	-	-	-
38	20	-	20	14